

On his accession to the Consulate Bonaparte found M. Ouvrard contractor for supplying the Spanish fleet under the command of Admiral Massaredo. This business introduced him to a correspondence with the famous Godoy, Prince of the Peace. The contract lasted three years, and M. Ouvrard gained by it a net profit of 15,000,000. The money was payable in piastres, at the rate of 3 francs and some centimes each, though the piastre was really worth 5 francs 40 centimes. But to recover it at this value it was necessary for M. Ouvrard to go and get the money in Mexico. This he was much inclined to do, but he apprehended some obstacle on the part of the First Consul, and, notwithstanding his habitual shrewdness, he became the victim of his over-precaution... On his application M. de Talleyrand undertook to ask the First Consul for authority to give him a passport. I was in the cabinet at the time, and I think I still hear the dry and decided "*No*," which was all the answer M. de Talleyrand obtained. When we were alone the First Consul said to me, "Do you not see, Bourrienne, this Ouvrard must have made a good thing of his business with the Prince of the Peace ? But the fool! Why did he get Talleyrand to ask me for a passport? That is the very thing that raised my suspicion. Why did he not apply for a passport as every one else does ? Have I the giving of them ? He is an ass; so much the worse for him."

I was sorry for Ouvrard's disappointment, and I own none the less so because he had intimated his willingness to give me a share in the business he was to transact in Spain; and which was likely to be very profitable. His brother went to Mexico in his stead.

In 1802 a dreadful scarcity afflicted France. M. Ouvrard took upon himself, in concert with Wanlerberghe, the task of importing foreign grain to prevent the troubles which might otherwise have been expected. In payment of the grain the foreign houses who sent it drew upon Ouvrard and Wanlerberghe for 26,000,000 francs in Treasury bills, which, according to the agreement with the Government, were to be paid. But when the bills of the foreign houses became due there